

spread from shire to shire, till half England was up in arms. The Court did not even know what was happening beyond the rebel lines. Every road was blocked. The King's mother, who arrived that evening among her anxious friends in London, was only let in by the courtesy of the peasants, who throughout the rebellion kept their hands off women and spared the King's household. Having been on a pilgrimage to the shrines of Kent, perhaps to mourn over her husband's tomb at Canterbury, she was driving back as fast as the horses could go, when the Kentish rebels stopped her waggon. She and her ladies were terribly frightened, but were allowed to pass unharmed by chivalrous captors, who might have used her as a hostage.¹

Both parties were ready for a conference. The men of Kent despatched a message to the King by prisoners in their camp. They invited him to cross the river and confer with them on Blackheath. He was rowed across in a barge, accompanied by his principal nobles. At Rotherhithe a deputation from the camp on the moor above was waiting on the bank to receive them. At the last moment prudence prevailed, and Richard was persuaded not to trust himself on shore. Very likely the councillors who gave this cautious advice, considered that the 'divinity' that 'doth hedge a King' would be little protection to his servants, and if such were their fears, they were well grounded. The rebels, shouting their demands across from the shore, professed their loyalty to Richard, but required the heads of John of G-aunt, Sudbury, Hales and several other ministers, some of whom were at that moment in the boat. The royal barge put back to the Tower, and events were allowed to take their course.²

It now became a primary object for the rebels to enter London. Hunger was already besieging the camp on Black-heath.³ Not only could they not maintain their present position ; they could not even join the Esses rebels on the northern shore, unless the London road was opened to them. There was no other bridge over the Thames within miles, and they seem not to have had shipping sufficient to attempt

¹ Froiss., ii. 462. « HI J3., 513 ; Froiss., ii. 465 ; *Cont. Eulog.* » iii. 352,

» Froiss., ii. 466.